

2014

Wild Thyme

Debra Marquart

Iowa State University, marquart@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_pubs



Part of the [Poetry Commons](#)

The complete bibliographic information for this item can be found at http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/engl_pubs/168. For information on how to cite this item, please visit <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/howtocite.html>.

This Creative Writing is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Publications by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

Wild Thyme

Abstract

I took the photographs as the other poets
fell backwards into wild thyme, too worried
about appearing the tourist or ruining my clothes...

Disciplines

Poetry

Comments

Originally published as "Wild Thyme." *Through a Distant Lens: Travel Poems*. Ed. Sheryl Clough. Whidbey Island, WA: CreateSpace, 2014.

Wild Thyme

I took the photographs as the other poets
fell backwards into wild thyme, too worried
about appearing the tourist or ruining my clothes

in the phryngana, the zone between mountain
and sea, wood and water. On the rented boat
to Antiparos, as the others slipped into wet suits,

pulled on squeaky flippers, rolled into azure depths
with Panayotis, the marine biologist, I stayed
on the moored boat with whiskery Captain Giorgos

nursing my salty old grudges against water.
On the south shore of the island, when invited
to sing into the mouth of the sea caves that echo

the ancient world back, I had only this pop tune
to offer (I can't bear to name it). Between Lefkes
and Marpissa, where the Byzantine trail empties

down to the sea, when the old man with hair
like a wild bird's nest and a toothless collapsing
chin saw me, an American, enter the chapel

he guarded, he shouted, *Ah, George Bush!*
and my only response was, *I didn't do it!*
(meaning, vote for him) which made all

the other Americans laugh. At Marathi,
where the mountain opens to marble quarries
so translucent that the Venus de Milo,

the temples on Delos, and Napoleon's tomb
are carved from it, as the guide distributed
the headlamps for our underground excursion,

he had to ask, *Now, is anyone here claustrophobic?*
And I had to answer, *Well, yes,* because
I would never depend upon tourists

to pull my limp and breathless body
from any dark crevasse. So I guarded
the entrance as the others descended,

sat back to study the guidebooks.
Did you know that 150,000 slaves mined
these quarries. They say a bas relief

above one opening depicts Pan cavorting
with Nymphs. Did you know the thyme
that grows on this mountainside feeds

bees that make rare, wild honey, the color
of amber. Aromatic and savory, they say,
with the taste of white pepper, dates, and fruit.

-- Debra Marquart